

Frequently Asked Questions



UK Research
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*Please check the FAQs in the first instance for an answer to your query.
If you cannot find the answer to your question in this document or in the useful documents below,
please contact catalyst@zinc.vc*

Information about the Awards	3
1. What are the Catalyst Awards?	3
2. How do the Catalyst Awards define 'later life'?	3
3. How much funding is available?	3
4. What should the duration of the proposed project be?	3
5. What output is expected after 12 months?	3
6. Are there further rounds of the Awards?	3
7. Can we apply for other funding within the Healthy Ageing Challenge?	4
Information about Zinc	4
8. Who is Zinc?	4
9. Why did UKRI choose Zinc as their partner?	4
10. How does Zinc support researchers?	4
11. Do you have testimonials from Awardees?	4
12. Who owns the IP?	5
People and Project Eligibility	5
13. Are the Awards right for me?	5
14. Can the application include co-investigators?	5
15. I am a researcher who is currently based outside of the UK - am I eligible?	5
16. I have previously applied to the Awards - can I apply again?	5
17. I'm a current holder of an Award - can I apply?	6
18. Where can I allocate grant money?	6
19. Are there examples of previously funded projects?	6
20. Will the recipient of the Award be expected to work on the project full-time?	6
21. Can I apply as the PI for two different projects?	6
22. Can the applicant/PI be an Early Career Researcher?	6
23. Do I need to have a PhD to apply?	6
24. I'm currently completing my PhD, can I apply?	6
25. What support do I need from my host institution?	7
26. Is my University or Research Organisation eligible?	7
27. I'm an entrepreneur with links to a university or eligible organisation. Can I apply?	7
Additional Information: Statement on use of journal-based metrics	8

Information about the Awards

1. What are the Catalyst Awards?

The Catalyst Awards are part of the UKRI Healthy Ageing Challenge and the Healthy Longevity Global Grand Challenge, founded by the U.S. National Academy of Medicine. This is a worldwide movement to improve physical, mental, and social well-being for people as they age.

UKRI and Zinc are searching for entrepreneurial academics who want to translate their research into impactful and scalable products, services and interventions that are high-risk, high-reward and innovative.

2. What is the scope of the Awards?

Activities during the award

This grant is not for standard research projects. We are looking for high-risk, high-reward research-based ideas that will transform our lives as we age. Applicants should seek to find a route to sustaining their project and making impact at scale, whether through a commercial spin-out, social enterprise, IP licensing or other sustainability model.

The awards are designed to support early stage innovation. You may join with a problem you want to solve and a number of concepts to develop or test, or you may already have a prototype or early iteration of your product/service.

The funding can be used for a range of activities, including but not limited to: testing the desirability, feasibility and viability of your ideas, market research, piloting, prototyping and user-testing.

You can view the second cohort of 22 Awardees and the third (current) cohort of 21 Awardees and their projects on the Healthy Longevity Challenge website.

Topic areas and disciplines

Applications should address the core aims of UKRI's Healthy Ageing Challenge which are to:

help people remain active, productive, independent and socially connected across generations for as long as possible and narrow the gap between the experiences of the richest and the poorest. Researchers from any discipline are encouraged to apply and we are interested in proposals that address issues in any area that impacts quality of later life (from housing to communities, finances to health, and anything in between).

We particularly welcome applicants from the arts, humanities and social sciences, applications from underrepresented researchers, and from researchers working with underrepresented communities.

We also encourage early career researchers to apply; this is an exciting opportunity to gain experience as a Principal Investigator, as you do not need to be a permanent member of staff to be a PI on this Award.

3. How do the Catalyst Awards define 'later life'?

We use a working definition of 50+ to describe the age range that may be considered in scope for these Awards. However, this is not fixed and proposals will be judged on their individual merit. We encourage applicants to take a life-course approach, recognising that there may be influences throughout life that determine quality of later life. Applications that describe work with people earlier in life may be in scope if the purpose is to improve health or wellbeing in later life.

We are interested in proposals that address issues in any area that impacts quality of later life (from housing to communities, finances to health, and anything in between).

4. How much funding is available?

The funding available is £62,500 (at 100% fEC). UKRI will provide £50,000 (80% fEC), with the remaining 20% coming from your institution. Up to 20 Awards will be made.

5. What should the duration of the proposed project be?

The duration of the grant should not exceed 12 months, and should be a minimum of 9 months. Applicants should aim for projects to become sustainable and scalable beyond the Awards.

6. What output is expected after 12 months?

The end goal of the programme is not to produce traditional research outputs, such as papers, events or datasets (we consider these 'by-products' of your research activity, not end goals). The end goal is to progress the translation of your research into impactful products, services or interventions. This means exploring the best models to sustain your work beyond the funding period (e.g. a commercial venture, licensing the IP, creating a not-for-profit, etc.), running a pilot with end-users, creating or further developing a prototype, etc - with the aim of getting 'closer to market' (in a broad sense) by the end of the programme.

7. Are there further rounds of the Awards?

No, this is intended to be the final funding round of the Healthy Ageing Catalyst Awards.

8. Can we apply for other funding within the Healthy Ageing Challenge?

Yes. Healthy Ageing Catalyst Award grant holders will be permitted to apply for funding within the Healthy Ageing Challenge portfolio.

Information about Zinc

9. Who is Zinc?

Zinc is a mission-led company created in 2017, our early funders included [LSE](#) and [Aspect](#), with the aim to generate social impact across our four missions - one of which is **improving the quality of later life**. We do this by supporting talented individuals to build commercial businesses that are inspired and underpinned by social science research.

Our team seeks to support ambitious, entrepreneurial people with ideas that can scale and change society for the better. We're energised by novel ideas and different solutions, and value the strength that comes from involving people with a diversity of viewpoints and backgrounds. This is why we're delighted to partner with UKRI, to reach the brightest and most innovative academic minds and help researchers to maximise their impact beyond academia.

10. Why did UKRI choose Zinc as their partner?

UKRI chose Zinc to deliver a programme of support that helps Catalyst Awardees to grow and sustain the impact of their work. This quickly developed into a deeper collaboration, producing an application process that aims to give every applicant knowledge and insight into being an entrepreneurial researcher.

11. How does Zinc support researchers?

Zinc offers a 9-month, tailored support program to all Award winners. Current Catalyst Awardees take part in weekly structured sessions that offer inspiration with education, and benefit both their personal development and the development of their idea. This includes (but is not limited to) exploring inclusive design best practices, developing their marketing strategy to appeal to older adults, accessing pitching training and gaining clarity on pathways to impact and funding options. They are also connected with our unique ecosystem of experts from across academia, the public sector, charities, creative industries, technology and entrepreneurship.

You can read more about this in our [Programme of Support information document](#).

12. Do you have testimonials from Awardees?

Yes - some are available on our website and [you can see more testimonials here](#).

13. Who owns the IP?

Zinc's role during the Award is to provide a programme of support. We will not take ownership of IP generated by Award holders. Researchers will be expected to work closely with their individual TTOs and/or other relevant university teams to establish any relevant IP agreements. It is likely that specific agreements will vary across institutions.

People and Project Eligibility

14. What are the eligibility criteria?

In order to be eligible you must fulfil the following criteria:

- Your proposal must be within the scope of the Catalyst Awards (see item 2 above).
- You must be hosted by a UK university or an [eligible research organisation](#) for the duration of the award (minimum 9 months, maximum 12 months, starting from September 2023).
- You must have a PhD or equivalent professional experience.

Projects that have a clinical application are eligible for the Catalyst Awards, however applications that have a stronger fit within other public funding streams (particularly clinical trials and drug development eligible for MRC or NIHR funding, or devices that require substantial regulatory approval such as Class II Medical Devices) will not be eligible for the Catalyst Awards.

We actively encourage applications from underrepresented researchers, and from those working with underrepresented communities. We work to ensure that our recruitment processes are as inclusive as possible and that our panels are diverse. We create spaces where differences are actively sought, welcomed and accepted. We are happy to make adjustments for people who have a disability or long-term condition. If you would like us to make adjustments, please contact us at catalyst@zinc.

15. Can the application include co-investigators?

Yes. Co-Investigators can be included in applications. Funding from the programme will go to the research institution in the first instance, then to any partners. All co-investigators, including UK businesses, third party and government co-investigators, can only receive a maximum of 30% of the grant for combined costs.

Please [read the UKRI funding guidelines](#) and [inclusion of co-investigator guidelines](#) for more information.

16. I am a researcher who is currently based outside of the UK - am I eligible?

Yes, however for the duration of the Award you'll need to be employed and based at a UK based university (or other [eligible institution](#) in the UK) that will support your application.

17. I have previously applied to the Awards - can I apply again?

Yes, applicants can apply again, provided that the proposed project is substantively different to the previous proposal. This could mean entering the call aiming to solve a different problem, or aiming to tackle the same problem but taking a substantially different approach.

18. I'm a current holder of an Award - can I apply?

No.

19. Where can I allocate grant funding?

This funding can be used for costs such as salaries (including for the principal investigator), travel, consultancy, communications/public engagement and equipment. For details on how UKRI grant money can be allocated see page 24 onwards of the [ESRC research funding guide](#).

20. Are there examples of previously funded projects?

You can view details of the previously funded on the [Healthy Longevity Challenge website](#). Select 'United Kingdom Research and Innovation' as the competition sponsor.

21. Will the recipient of the Award be expected to work on the project full-time?

In order to ensure that there is an individual dedicated to driving this project forwards and engaging with the programme of support from Zinc, we suggest that at least one member of the project team should commit at least 30% of their time to the Catalyst Award. Ideally this person would be the Principal Investigator. Please note this is guidance and not a requirement; you may be able to justify other team compositions that allow you to meet the core needs of driving the project forwards and engaging with the programme of support.

22. Can I apply as the PI for two different projects?

No. You should choose a single project to submit as your expression of interest.

23. Can the applicant/PI be an Early Career Researcher?

Yes. Researchers working at any career level are encouraged to apply. We are particularly keen to hear from early career researchers, those from an arts, humanities and social science background, and those whose discipline areas are underrepresented in current healthy ageing scholarship.

24. Do I need to have a PhD to apply?

No, you must hold a PhD or have equivalent professional expertise. For discipline areas where PhDs are less common, we will accept applications from those without a PhD, where they can demonstrate they are active academics and/or practitioners and have the support of their institution to apply for this grant.

25. I'm currently completing my PhD, can I apply?

Yes, as long as you have completed your PhD by the time the grant starts in September, you can apply. If your PhD is funded by UKRI, your PhD funding must be completed before your Catalyst Award would start.

26. What support do I need from my host institution?

You will need to be hosted by a UK university or an [eligible research organisation](#) for the duration of the award. The institution will receive the funding on behalf of the applicant. Please note your position at your supporting organisation does not need to last beyond the Catalyst Award (9-12 months, starting from September 2023).

When you submit your expression of interest in February, you will need to submit a letter of support from your Head of Department (or similar role) confirming that they support your application, that you will be hosted in their department for the duration of the Award, and that the institution will make the 20% fEC institution contribution.

We strongly recommend that you discuss this with your Head of Department by the time you attend one of the Prototyping Problems workshops in December and January.

27. Is my University or Research Organisation eligible?

Please see the UKRI website for a list of eligible organisations [here](#).

28. I'm an entrepreneur with links to a university or eligible organisation. Can I apply?

Yes, if you are affiliated with a UK based university or [eligible research institution](#) that will support your application, and will be hosted by that institution for the duration of the Award (up to 12 months, starting in September 2021). Unfortunately, we cannot match prospective applicants to institutions.

Those based in business, third sector or government organisations can only be involved as co-investigators. Combined costs for international co-investigators, and UK business, third sector and government body co-investigators must not exceed 30% of the total fEC of the grant application. Please see the [UKRI funding guidelines](#) for more details.

Additional Information: Statement on use of journal-based metrics

As part of UKRI's commitment to support the recommendations and principles set out by the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), UKRI reviewers and panel members are advised not to use journal-based metrics, such as journal impact factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an investigator's contributions, or to make funding decisions.

The content of a paper is more important than publication metrics, or the identity of the journal, in which it was published, especially for early-stage researchers. Reviewers and panel members are encouraged to consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets, software, inventions, patents, preprints, other commercial activities, etc.) in addition to research publications. UKRI advise peer reviewers and panel members to consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.